

## Historicity of *Drain the Marsh*

This document is for readers who are curious about how historically accurate *Drain the Marsh* is. While I do not cite the sources of my information—if I did, I’d be an academic making lots more money than I do as a novelist—I provide a partial Bibliography at the end, for those wishing more formal information.

Note the following definitions in the text that follows:

- “Historical” means it’s a true fact of ancient or modern history.
- “Fictional” means I made it up.
- “TMK” stands for “To my knowledge.”
- “TTLOMU” stands for “To the limits of my understanding.”

### Historicity

- Geography My description of the geography of Athens in 423 B.C. is accurate TTLOMU.
- Chronology The Greeks did have 12 months in the year, but naturally they didn’t correspond to ours, i.e., a Greek month would have spanned parts of two current Western months. In general my chronology is accurate, e.g., the following did occur in approximately the time span that I specify in the book: the *Lenaia*, the Spring opening of the Oracle of Delphi, the *Anthesteria* celebration, the City Dionysia, and the Peloponnesian War truce that led to the Peace of Nicias. I was careful to ensure the chronology was credible and was lucky that it was possible to do so. But it’s possible I was off by a week or two here or there. Sue me.
- Page vi The map was drawn in freehand. I don’t advise using it to sail about the Aegean.
- Page 1 *Clouds* was indeed a failure, coming in last place. However, it was actually produced at the City Dionysia, not the *Lenaia*. This is the only case where I knowingly fibbed. But it fit the plot and the chronology of other events too perfectly to pass up.
- Page 2 *Farmers* is a lost play of Aristophanes and was indeed produced in 424 B.C. Its plot and success, or lack of it, are unknown.
- Page 2 The Sacred Plea of the Suppliant is fictional.
- Page 4 The Eleven and the Abode of the Eleven are historical. They had some sort of law enforcement function, but exactly what is uncertain. Korax is fictional.
- Page 6 *Cleon Princess*: Think *Trump Princess*, which The Donald bought from the Sultan of Brunei for \$29 million. After one of Trump’s many bankruptcies, it was seized by his creditors and sold for \$9 million less than he paid for it.
- Page 7 Tradition has it that Cleon indeed made his fortune in the leather business. Comic actors did wear large fake leather phalluses.
- Page 7 Aristophanes mentions dildos in *Lysistrata*. Miletus did export them.
- Page 8 The *Euandria*, the Pyrrhic Dance, and the Festival of the Naked Boys (“*Gymnopaedia*”) were indeed festivals and/or beauty contests for naked males. If you’ll remember, for a time The Donald ran the Miss Universe pageant and the Miss Teen USA pageant. Scary.

- Page 8 The *ekecheiria* truce is historical.
- Page 9 - 10 The description of the Athenian government is accurate, TTLOMU.
- Page 12 - 13 The description of the torturing of slave witnesses is historical, as is the penalties for adultery.
- Page 14 The description of Delian League finances is historical, TTLOMU.
- Page 15 The description of the Mytilene invasion is historical. How much it cost the Athenians, and how much tribute Mytilene paid per year, is a guess on my part.
- Page 15 *Frying-Pan Men* is a lost play of Aristophanes. When it was produced and whether it was successful are unknown.
- Page 15 The description of theater income is at least partly accurate.
- Chapter 4 The description of consulting the Oracle of Delphi is accurate, TTLOMU. There really were three Pythias on hand. The Oracle *was* closed for the three coldest months of the year. However, to make my chronology work I posited that the decision of *which* months were the coldest was decided ad hoc. That's probably fictional, as is a Priestess of Apollo filling in for the Pythias.
- Page 24 *Banqueters, Babylonians, Acharnians, The Cavalry, Farmers, and Clouds* were indeed Aristophanes' first plays.
- Page 27 Cleito was indeed the mother of Euripides the tragedian, and a vegetable seller as well. This reference previously had more relevance, when in *Merchant Ships* she tells a joke about "taking a leek." But I cut that part, to simplify the play.
- Page 29 *Cleon Shuttle, Cleon Castle*: Think Trump Shuttle, Trump Castle, both of which went bankrupt. *Cleon Academy*: Think Trump University, which went belly-up due to the number of lawsuits filed against it. *Cleon Estates, Cleon Manor, Cleon Villa*: Generic businesses representing hotels and gambling houses that also went belly-up as part of The Donald's six corporate bankruptcies, e.g., the Plaza Hotel and Casino.
- Page 37 *Dionysus Shipwrecked* was an actual comedy, but some scholars dispute whether Aristophanes was really the author.
- Page 38 Magnes' *Battle of Cats and Mice* is historical but lost.
- Page 46 Peace of Callias: historical.
- Page 57 Lioness on the cheese grater: A sexual position mentioned in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*.
- Page 63 - 64 Policemen were indeed Scythian archer slaves. The text accurately describes their function.
- Page 64 Waterboarding: Obviously fictional. No civilized society would allow it.
- Chapters 14,16,18 The descriptions of Pericles, Cleon, and Athenian history and society are historical.
- Page 72 Tenting: "Ah do de-kly-ah, liddle ol' me has no idea what this vul-gah term means."
- Page 73, 133 Melite and Choerine were indeed Euripides' first two wives.
- Page 79 The physical description of Socrates is traditional. The description of him as a brave soldier is historical.

- Chapters 14,18 The description of the symposium is historical. The appearance of women at a symposium would be extremely rare but not unknown. The fact that neither Thalia nor Lysistrata are normal Athenian women increases the episode's plausibility.
- Page 82 I posit Spartan skirmishers harassing Athens outside of campaign season. TMK this is fictional.
- Page 87 - 88 The description of the role of Athenian women in society is historical, as is the description of Athenian (lack of) courtship and marriage. The description of the institution of *paidierastia* is likewise historical. *Paidierastia* was only sometimes sexual. Greeks strongly decried homosexual relations between adult men and considered it something completely different from *paidierastia*.
- Page 91 All of the works in the novel attributed to Democritus are historical but lost.
- Page 94 Solon's telling King Croesus the tale of Kleobis and Biton is historical.
- Page 95 It was Megyn Kelly who on national television pointed out to Trump that he had in the past referred to women as "fat pigs", "dogs", "slobs", and "disgusting animals".
- Page 98 *Cleon Network*: Think Trump Network, another snake oil business that went belly up.
- Page 98 Spartiates are thought of as the ultimate manly men, which is fine, as long as that description includes institutional homosexuality. Spartiates, even married ones, lived in men-only *syssitia* barracks and were expected to maintain a homosexual relationship with a fellow Spartiate. The thinking was that a man fought harder if the soldier next to him in the fox hole was his lover. The Theban Sacred Band followed the same practice and comprised if anything even more deadly soldiers than the Spartans.
- Page 100 "Between our army and navy Athens has the strongest military in the world .... Besides, our party's controlled the Assembly for the last six years. So if we're not great now, who's to blame?" All true, not only of Athens but of the United States at the time of the 2016 election as well.
- Chapter 21 The description of Athenian art and architecture in 423 B.C. is accurate TTLOMU.
- Page 102 Unreasoning fear of the Agora: Get it? Agoraphobia?
- Page 103 *The Smiting Zeus*: Now referred to as the Zeus of Artemisium or Poseidon of Artemisium, which indeed sank in the Strait of Artemisium in the approximate timeframe of this novel.
- Page 113 Piled (knotted) carpets: These are thought to have come into existence around 1700 B.C. in Turkmenistan. The oldest complete piled carpet in existence is the famous Armenian or Persian Pazyryk Carpet from 450 B.C. So Lysistrata weaving one is completely plausible.
- Page 117 Herms: Historical. Many exist in museums today. I've viewed one in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.
- Page 118 Socrates was indeed reputed to be a mason and/or sculptor in his younger days.
- Page 129 - 130 The description of Cleisthenes' reform of the Athenian constitution is historical TTLOMU. His bending of his own rules for the sake of his clan is exaggerated but not wholly fictional. Thorikos as a center of poverty and aristocratic support is fictional.
- Page 135 Theseus' ship is historical. That is, the Athenians at that time believed it was Theseus' ship.
- Page 139 Five Supreme Court justices getting the right to keep and bear arms wrong is historical.
- Page 152 - 153 The description of the Athenian social system is accurate TTLOMU.

- Chapter 32 The description of the Greater and Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries is accurate TTLOMU.
- Page 173 The Roman model of fulling wool: This is accurate as a model; but I don't know if the Romans had developed it by the time that the novel takes place, nor whether it's feasible that it could have disseminated to an individual Greek by then.
- Page 175 The listed aristocratic clans are historical, as is the necessity for Athens to import grain from the Black Sea region.
- Page 176 The draining of Lake Orchomenos in the Bronze Age and its effect are historical.
- Page 178 Solon's four social classes are historical.
- Chapter 40 The Adversities are of course fictional. Or should I say allegorical?
- Page 206 Festival of Circe: Fictional, but too apt to pass up. Though portrayed in modern times as a witch, Circe was actually a minor goddess. Hecate is more accurately considered the Greek goddess of magic.
- Chapter 43 Fictional, except for the existence of *New Clouds* or *Second Clouds*. *Clouds* was indeed rewritten (presumably by Aristophanes himself) and today is known as *New Clouds* or *Second Clouds* to those who are being precise. The original version of *Clouds* was lost, and today we have only the rewritten version.
- Page 218 *Merchant Ships* was indeed presented in 423 B.C. but is now lost.
- Page 232 Stafylinos was indeed an Ancient Greek aphrodisiac, but I can't swear it was in use at the time of the novel.
- Page 240 Laches, Lamachus, Eucles, Nicias, Simonides, and Eurymedon were indeed all Athenian generals in the approximate timeframe of the novel.
- Page 240 Being thrown into the chasm was one of the two forms of Athenian capital punishment. The other was drinking hemlock, which was Socrates' fate.
- Chapter 52 *Merchant Ships* as depicted in the novel is in my opinion a pretty fair representation of what Athenian Old Comedy was like—subject to the requirements of keeping a 21<sup>st</sup> century readership amused. It is unlikely that the performance of *Merchant Ships* was interrupted by an avalanche of shit, as occurred in the United States post-2016.
- Page 252 *A Pain in Uranus*, *Danäe Takes a Golden Shower*: Alas, fictional. *Fifty Grades of Hay*: Fictional, thank God.
- Page 253 - 254 The description of Athenian theater is historical TTLOMU.
- Page 269 In Athenian comedy Hercules is routinely portrayed as a glutton.
- Chapter 54 The description of an Athenian wedding is accurate in so far as it goes; but the point is that the happy couple were departing from normal practice, given the unusual circumstances of their marriage.
- Page 286 *Wasps* was presented at the *Lenaia* of 422 B.C. Aristophanes served as his own *choregos*. It won second prize.
- Page 286 *Prologue* (typically referred to by its Greek name, *Proagon*) is a lost play of Aristophanes, also presented at the *Lenaia* of 422 B.C. TMK nothing is known about its plot or success. Since it was illegal for a

given poet to have two plays at the same festival, it was presented under Philonides' name, who served as *choregos*. Some scholars maintain that Philonides was actually the author too.

Afterward This is historical, although as the text says, I suspect the Oracle's predication is apocryphal.

## Partial Bibliography

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